

The Imperfect Indicative of  
Latin: A Study Based Chiefly  
Upon Vergil's Aeneid Books  
I-VI

by Lulu Brown

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Submitted to the Department of Latin of  
the University of Kansas in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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The fact that Dr. Arthur L. Wheeler<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Chas. E. Bennett<sup>2</sup> recognize an aoristic use of the imperfect indicative in early Latin led me to begin an investigation in this field of Latin Literature with the purpose of ascertaining if such a tense meaning could be attributed to the imperfect. I examined "The Captives" of Plautus but did not find any imperfects that seemed to me to be aoristic.

Neither Wheeler nor Bennett stated that such a use continued into later Latin but one might easily infer from their discussions that they believe this to be true. If found in early Latin only it seemed reasonable to believe that the tense meanings had not yet become firmly established and that such a use was simply a sign of the somewhat unsettled state of the language at that early period of its development. Therefore without continuing my investigation in Plautus I turned to Caesar and Cicero to see if

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1. Wheeler "The Syntax of the Imperfect Indicative in Early Latin" Classical Philology I p. 357. and "The Imperfect Indicative in Early Latin" Am. Journal of Philology XXIV p. 163

2. Bennett "Syntax of Early Latin--The Verb." p. 26.

such a tense meaning could be found in the works of these prose writers of the classical period. My investigations covered Book I of Caesar's "Gallic War" and Cicero's "Manilian Law" and again I found no examples of the imperfect that seemed to me to be aoristic.

Thinking that verse might present some peculiarities of tense usage not to be found in either of these authors I next began an examination of "The Aeneid" of Vergil and becoming interested in investigations in this work I did not return to early Latin but continued my study through the first six books. Therefore my statements concerning the imperfects of early Latin will not be of any great value but I shall include those of "The Captives" in this discussion.

As one would not be able to study any supposed aoristic use of the imperfect apart from all of its other tense meanings and the tense meanings of the aoristic perfect and present my investigations cover all imperfects, aoristic perfects and presents of all authors examined. First I shall discuss the imperfect uses.

Both Wheeler and Bennett agree in assigning two general values to the imperfect: the progressive and aoristic and recognize an occasional use which they term the "shifted imperfect." Therefore they make all imperfects aoristic that



are not progressive or shifted. My study has led me to believe that the aoristic use is questionable as I will attempt to show later and I have found but two examples of the shifted imperfect. The progressive use therefore seems to be the real function of the tense.

Before proceeding farther it will be necessary to define the terms already employed.

The shifted imperfect is the imperfect indicative which is equivalent to an imperfect subjunctive with present force or in other words equivalent to the apodosis of a contrary to fact condition in the present. As Prof. Hale (Hale-Buck Grammar 582-3) points out, "this use is found with verbs or phrases expressing obligation, possibility and the like and certain other phrases made up of a neuter adjective with "es" or an equivalent."

By the aoristic imperfect is meant the use of that tense as an equivalent for an aoristic perfect. In the words of Prof. Hale<sup>1</sup> "the aoristic perfect views the past as seen in the summary from the present." This tense and the historical or aoristic present, a tense that is freely employed as its equivalent, are used in telling of past events to record those acts or states that in the mind of the writer

. . . . .  
1. "Sequence of Tenses" Am. Journal of Philology IX

are regarded as the most important and that advance his account. They are also used in dependent clauses to refer to a time antecedent to that of the main clause. An aoristic imperfect would have to be used in a similar way.

The imperfect tense is primarily used to represent an act in progress or a state as existing at a certain past time which the writer or speaker has in mind. Therefore this use is called the progressive imperfect.

To understand my classification of all the imperfects examined it will be necessary to explain this progressive use in greater detail. The especial need of a progressive verb form I believe is to describe some state or situation under which the events told or recorded took place and therefore I shall for convenience use the term "descriptive imperfect" for this usage although Wheeler and Bennett object to the term as one that cannot be employed with accuracy. They suggest that it be called "the progressive imperfect in description." This imperfect use will be shown to be the one mainly employed and in narrative it is opposed in use to the aorists for as has been said the aorists advance the narrative and the descriptive imperfects tell how things were at the time of the aorists.

Quite often this descriptive imperfect conveys the added idea of action that is repeated at intervals of any

length by a single person or a succession of persons or action that is persisted in by a single person or a succession of persons. Such imperfects I have classed as descriptive repeated or descriptive persistent. No sharp line of distinction can be drawn between these two ideas. Those descriptives that do not have these accessory ideas I have called "simple descriptives."

At times the progressive force is not as clear but the idea of repeated or persistent action seems to be the prominent one. This is probably a development from the repeated and persistent use in description. They are classed under the progressives as repeated and persistent uses.

From an examination of the articles of Wheeler and Bennett it will be noticed that my treatment of the progressive differs from theirs. All that Wheeler includes under his "simple progressive" I call "simple descriptive" without making the further distinctions of the imperfect of the immediate past and the reminiscient imperfect. Wheeler also recognizes as a progressive use a customary and frequentative imperfect, the customary representing habitual action and the frequentative actions repeated at intervals close together. My terms "repeated" and "persistent" include examples that Wheeler would place in one of his two groups and seem to me to denote a better distinction.

Bennett uses the term "persistent" as I have used it and makes all other repeated actions "customary".

In outline form my classification of the progressive imperfect is as follows:

A. Descriptive

1. Simple Descriptive
2. Repeated Descriptive.
3. Persistent Descriptive.

B. Repeated.

C. Persistent.

Before proceeding to give my classification according to this outline I shall state the variety of ways in which the descriptive imperfect may be used to describe the situation of some other act or state. It may express an action or state:

(1) Continued during but more extensive than the time of some other act or state expressed or implied.

Aeneid II 760-763.

procedo et Priami sedes arcemque reviso | et iam port-  
icibus vacuis Lunonis asylo | custodes lecti Phoenix et dirus  
Ulixes | praedam adservabant.

(2) In progress before the time of some other act or state and interrupted by it.

Aeneid I 187-188

consistit hic arcumque manu celerisque corripuit fidus  
quae tela gerabat Achates sagittas

(3) Beginning at the time of some other act but not ending with it.

Prof. Hale (Hale-Buck Latin Grammar 492) recognizes the use of the past perfect and the picturesque present perfect to indicate the rapid succession of events and the first six books of the Aeneid seem to furnish ten examples of a similar use of the imperfect. All but two of the ten follow some verb of ordering. The descriptive force is not lost.

Aeneid I 360.

his commota fugam Dido sociosque parabat

The shade of Sychaeus has bidden Dido to depart and has disclosed a treasure to aid her on her journey and then this verse immediately follows indicating that Dido without any loss of time "was preparing" to depart. Certainly an analogous use is found in English in such sentences as: "He ordered me to stop the train and instantly I was waving the signal."

Such a use might be called the "instantaneous" use of the simple descriptive because it represents the action as occasioned by and going on immediately after some act.

(4) Contemporaneous with the time of some other act or state and beginning and ending with it.

Aeneid II 88-90.

dum stabat regno incolumis regumque vigebat  
conciliis et nos aliquod nomenque decusque  
gessimus.

a. Contemporaneous with the time of some other act and beginning and ending with it but merely presenting it in summary.

In the first six books of the Aeneid ten times a verb of "saying" was used with "sic" or some form of "talis" not to advance the story but to describe in summary that that had already been told. This might be called "the descriptive in summary."

Aeneid V 852

talìa dicta dabat

b. Contemporaneous with the tense of some other act or state and representing one of a series of acts that begin and end with it. The details of some other act are thus told.

Gallie War Bk. I 26 (1-10)

Ad multam noctem etiam ad impedimenta pugnatum est,  
propterea quod pro vallo carros obiecerant et e loco superiore in nostros venientes tela coniciebant, et non nulli in-

tert~~er~~ carros raedasque mataros ac tragulas subiciebant  
nostros<sub>que</sub> vulnerabant.

My classification of all imperfects examined is as follows:

I. Progressive Imperfect.

A. Descriptive

1. Simple Descriptive

Capt. (Plautus--Text--Fleckeisen)

20 erat

215 erat

247 servihas

(a past tense is implied)

273 erat

285 erat

(The mind has been carried back by "liquimus" 282. "Fuit" 288 appears to be used in the same way as erat" but in this case the writer is not telling how things were at a past time but is giving a new fact."

303 audebat

(past time is implied and then described by imperfect).

474 erat

504 eminebam

662 audebas

(The verb here has the idea of "mean". Perhaps the imperfect is used to express some such thought as "While you were making that list did you not mean etc.")

705 dabam

("abissent" 705 means "would have")

887 erat

913 formidabam

(metui" 912 takes the mind back to past time and the imperfect describes)

913 frendebat

The same use as "formidabam".

916 erant

983 erat

Descriptive of the time of "dedit" 982

Man. Law. (Cicero--Text C. F. W. Mueller)

IV 9 gerebamus

10 habebat

V 13 audiebant

VIII 21 erant

IX 23 concitabantur

23 erat

23 commovebatur

24 invabatur



XII	33	videbatis
	35	premebantur
XIV	41	videbatur
	41	habebamus
XVI	46	erat
XVII	53	videbatur
	53	capiebantur
	53	prohibebamur
	53	erant
XVIII	55	poteramus
	55	pteramus
	55	carebamus
	55	commeabant
	55	timebat
	55	habebamus
	55	pudebat
XIX	56	erant
	56	sentiebatis
XX	60	minitabantur
XXI	62	constituebatur
XXIII	67	videbat

Gallic War Book I (Caesar -- Text--Walker)

2<sup>2</sup> fiebat

2<sup>(14)</sup> afficiebantur

2<sup>(15)</sup> arbitrabantur

2<sup>(17)</sup> patebant

3<sup>(14)</sup> abtinebat

3<sup>(15)</sup> erat

4<sup>(3)</sup> oportebat

4<sup>(7)</sup> habebat

5<sup>(6)</sup> portaturi erant

5<sup>(12)</sup> oppugnabant

6<sup>(1)</sup> erant

6<sup>(4)</sup> impendebat

6<sup>(12)</sup> existimabant

6<sup>(15)</sup> erat

7<sup>(6)</sup> erat

7<sup>(9)</sup> obtinebat

7<sup>(14)</sup> tenebat

7<sup>(14)</sup> putabat

7<sup>(16)</sup> existimabat

8<sup>(1)</sup> habebat

8<sup>(12)</sup> erat

9<sup>(1)</sup> relinquebatur

9<sup>(2)</sup> poterant

9<sup>(6)</sup> poterat

9<sup>(6)</sup> erat

9 (8) studebat  
9 (9) volebat  
10 (4) intellegebat  
10 (9) hiemabant  
11 (3) populabantur  
11 (11) habebant  
12 (4) transibant  
12 (11) appellabatur  
15 (4) habebat  
15 (11) habebat  
16 (4) erant  
16 (5) suppetebat  
16 (6) poterat  
16 (7) nolebat  
16 (11) habebat  
16 (12) praeerat  
18 (2) sentiebat  
18 (3) nolebat  
18 (27) praeerat  
19 (6) arbitrabatur  
19 (8) repugnabat  
19 (12) verebatur  
19 (5) habebat  
21 (16) habebatur

23(1) supererat  
23(4) aberat  
25(9) poterant  
25(11) suberat  
25(14) claudebant  
25(15) erant  
28(7) erat  
29(5) erat  
32(1) aderant  
38(5) videbat  
33(6) intellegebat  
33(11) arbitrabatur  
33(14) videbat  
33(15) existimabant  
33(19) putabat  
38(5) existimabat  
38(11) erant  
38(11) erat  
38(17) muniebatur  
39(11) habebant  
39(15) poterant  
39(19) habebant  
39(20) praeerant

39 (20) perturbantur

39 (21) volebant

39 (25) nuntiabant

40 (14) videbatur

40 (48) confidebat

41 (11) habebat

42 (5) arbitrabatur

42 (57) veniebat

42 (14) volebat

42 (5) audebat

42 (18) confidebat

43 (1) erat

43 (3) aberat

46 (6) videbat

46 (7) putabat

47 (9) existimabat

47 (13) utebatur

47 (15) utebatur

48 (10) erat

48 (11) erant

48 (14) versabantur

48 (17) prodeundum erat

48 (17) recipiendum erat

48 (17) erat

49 (7) aberat

51 (8) valebat

52 (14) praeerat

52 (14) erat

~~52~~ erat

52 (5) versabantur

53 (17) videbat

Aeneid (Vergil--Text--Ribbeck)

I. 31 arcebat

32 errabant

35 dabant

35 ruebant

113 vehebat

188 gerebat

223 erat

268 erat

343 erat

346 habebat

360 parabat

Instantaneous use in description

362 erat

395 turbabat

419 ascendeat

447 condebat

448 surgebat

449 studebat

466 videbat

471 vastabat

475 ferebant

479 ibant

484 vendebat

503 erat

503 ferebat

507 dabat

508 aequabat

508 trahebat

515 ibant

519 petebant

544 erat

Dates back to the time of "fuit" 534

559 fremebant

581 ardebant

622 vastabat

622 tenebat

626 valebat

656 tendebat

Instantaneous use in description

695 ibat

Instantaneous use in description

696 portabat

Instantaneous use in description

II 1 tenebant

22 manebant

29 tendebat

34 ferebant

58 trahebant

84 vetabat

88 vigebat

88 stabat

92 trahebam

Instantaneous use in description

93 indignabar

Instantaneous use in description

145 videbant

202 mactabat

209 tenebant

211 lambebant

254 ibat

Instantaneous use in description

268 erat

274 erat



279 videbar

The perfect might have been expected here  
but the imperfect seems to be used to continue the descrip-  
tion of the dream and not to be used as "visus." 271

344 ferebat

376 dabantur

382 abibat

403 trahebam

406 arcebant

453 erat

455 manebant

457 trahebat

464 dabant

472 tegebat

517 sedebant

567 eram

574 sedebat

588 iactabam

Descriptive in summary

588 ferebar

636 optabam

636 petebam

656 dabatur

664 erat

Used to express the discovery of a state of affairs existing before.

672 insertabam

672 ferebam

679 replebat

726 movebant

730 propinquabam

730 videbar

757 tenebant

763 adservabant

801 surgebat

802 ducebat

802 tenebant

803 dabatur

III. 9 iubebat

19 ferebam

21 mactabam

34 venerabar

This imperfect is used to describe the situation between the second and third attempts of Aeneas to uproot the twigs on the mound of Polydorus and seems to lead to "auditur" 40.

84 venerabar

110 habitabant

137 dabam

140 liquebant

140 trahebant

142 negabat

142 arebant

147 erat

147 habebat

151 fundebat

173 erat

174 videbar

175 manabat

303 vocabat

303 libabat

344 fundebat

Descriptive in summary

344 ciebat

Descriptive in summary

353 accipiebat

354 libabant

355 tenebant

472 inbebat

490 ferebat

511 subibat  
521 ~~r~~ubescibat  
585 erant  
587 tenebat  
588 surgebat  
608 haerebat  
636 latebat  
717 docebat

Descriptive in summary and also leads up to  
"conticuit" 718.

717 renarrabant

Descriptive in summary and also leads up to  
"conticuit" 718.

IV. 6 lustrabat

14 canebat

Past time implied--the time before Aeneas  
left her presence.

149 ibat

238 parabat

Instantaneous use of the descriptive.

256 valabat

257 secabat

262 erat

262 ardebat

322 adibam

409 dabas

522 erat

522 carpebant

528 [ lenibant]

553 rumpebat

Descriptive in summary

555 carpebat

584 spargebat

597 dabas

This does not refer to one definite or independent act but rather describes the situation of "decuit".

630 versabat

633 habebat

651 sinebant

675 petebas

"Fuit" of the same verse gives the time and "petebas" the description.

676 parabant

Used as "petebas" 675.

686 fovebat

687 siccabat

696 peribat

- V    1.    tenebat  
      2.    secabat  
      88    incendebat  
      98    fundebat

      An aorist coordinate with "caedit" 96, might seem to be the natural use here but "caedit" represents a single act and then seems to be followed by the imperfects used to describe the situation under which the events beginning with verse 100, took place.

      98    vocabat

          Used as "fundebat" of same verse

- 104    aderat  
      105    vehebant  
      159    propinquabant  
      167    revocabat  
      263    ferebant

          Imperfect used in continuing the description of the "lorica" of 260.

- 265    agebat  
      269    ibant  
      272    agebat  
      280    movebat  
      288    cingebant

289	erat
328	adventabant
357	ostentabat
385	frenebant
386	inbebant
405	rigebant
412	gerebat
415	dabat
416	canebat
478	astabat
511	pendebat
519	superabat
614	flebant
615	aspectabant
668	ducebat
674	ciebat
702	mutabat
706	dabat

This imperfect in the parenthetical clause is certainly not coordinate with the aorist "infit" 708. The two parenthetical verses seem to explain or describe the nature of the power given by Pallas to Nautes. Both Conington and Henry hold this view.

721 tenebat

724 manebat

833 agebat

836 laxabant

852 dabat

Descriptive in summary.

853 amittebat

853 tenebat

864 subibat

866 sonabant

VI. 124 tenebat

175 fremebant

This imperfect appears to describe the situation at the time of Aeneas arrival. However, the "praecipue pius Aeneas" that follows seems to contradict such a view as Aeneas is included but included apparently as an afterthought and so the verb form is not affected.

208 erat

209 crepitabant

213 flebant

214 ferebant

239 poterant

241 ferebat



268 ibant

"As they went on" they saw the monsters of  
verses 273 and following.

305 ruebat

313 stabant

314 tendebat

337 agebat

345 canebat

This imperfect seems to be descriptive of  
the prophecy that misled him.

358 adnabam

358 tenebam

406 latebat

411 sedebant

451 errabat

468 lenibat

Descriptive in summary

468 ciebat

477 tenebant

518 ducebat

518 tenebat

519 vocabat

589 ibat

Refers back to "imitatur" 586 and describes.

589 poscebat

Used as "ibat" of same verse.

596 erat

608 manebat

661 manebat

681 lustrabat

682 recensebat

699 rigabat

706 volabant

860 videbat

## 2. Repeated Descriptive

Capt.

244 imperitabam

483 solebam

925 sustentabam

Gallic War. Book I.

25 (4) erat

26 (4) coniciebant

26 (4) subiciebant

26 (10) vulnerabant

33 (6) hortabantur

37 (1) referebantur

37 (2) veniebant

39 (5) praedicabant

39(14) querebantur

39(17) miserabantur

39(18) absignabantur

Act repeated by a succession of persons.

48(14) recipiebant

48(15) concurrebant

48(16) circumsistebant

54(5) postulabat

#### Aeneid

I 239 solabar

625 ferebat

II 30 solebant

456 solebat

459 iactabant

III 690 monstrabat

Descriptive in summary

IV. 485 dabat

V 373 ferebat

VI 160 serebant

167 obibat

Fuerat 166 dates back to past time.

### 3. Persistent Descriptive

Capt.

491 obambulabant

Gallic War Book I

39 (12) petebat

39 (14) remanebant

39 (24) dicebant

51 (12) implorabant

Aeneid

I 482 tenebat

II 124 canebant

Instantaneous use in description

650 manebat

650 perstabat

674 haerebat

Instantaneous use in description

674 tendebat

Instantaneous use in description

III 269 vocabat

IV 189 replebat

190 canebat

331 tenebat

332 premebat

437 orabat

Descriptive in summary

458 celebrat

485 servabat

VI. 124 orabat

Descriptive in summary

350 haerebam

350 regebam

469 tenebat

B. Repeated

Capt.

561 aibat

676 aiebatis

885 autumbas

Gallic War Book I

18<sup>(14)</sup> reperiebat

39<sup>(6)</sup> dicebant

Perhaps influenced by "praedicabant" 39

500<sup>(6)</sup> reperiebat

53<sup>(9)</sup> dicebat

Aeneid

VI 116 dabat

690 ducebam

This might possibly be taken to refer to the time before Aeneas' arrival and thus be descriptive of it.

690 rebar

Used as "ducebam" of the same verse

C. Persistent

Capt.

654 adsimalabat

917 percontabatur

Gallic War Book I

15 (10) continebat

This may possibly be descriptive of the time  
of the preceding perfects

22(11) expectabat

The imperfect may be descriptive of the time  
of the preceding perfects

22(12) abstinebat

Used as "expectabat" 22

43(11) docebat

43(13) docebat

52(13) premebant

This too may be descriptive

Aeneid

VI 113 ferebat

II Shifted Imperfect

Man. Law

XVI 50 (erat) mittendus

50 erat deligendus

### III. Apparent Acroistic

I hesitate to recognize such a group at all (1) because the large number of progressive imperfects is almost overwhelming evidence that some such force is inherent in all imperfects and (2) because I can see something of such a force in the six imperfects found in the Aeneid which I shall place in this class. I shall class them here rather than as progressives because the progressive idea is not as clear as in the case of all of the others examined and because I am doubtful of my interpretation of them. However I am not ready to concede that Vergil used them as acroists. It is quite possible that he employed them to convey an idea that I have failed to grasp.

#### Aeneid

III 183 canebat

This may possibly be used to express repeated action.

492 adfabar

The imperfect may possibly be used <sup>because</sup> in this verse as a whole <sup>in</sup> descriptive of Aeneas' feelings during the preceding acts.

559 canebat

The idea of repeated action may possibly be expressed by this imperfect.

V      75      ibat

This may be used in description relating back to the two preceding verses.

409    referebat

It is very doubtful whether this imperfect could indicate action going on at the time of the preceding verbs. "Tum" does not seem to permit such an interpretation.

VI     4      fundabat

The instantaneous use of the descriptive might account for the imperfect.

It will be noted that four of these six verbs are verbs of "saying." Wheeler practically confines the acristic use to two verbs "eram" and "aibam" and says that it is due to some peculiarity of the verbs and he calls them "colorless verbs." It is not clear why these verbs are "colorless" and others are not. Why, for example, are other verbs of saying as "dico" not "colorless" also? All of these verbs of "saying" "ajo" included are used in the writers with distinct meanings. To me Wheeler's explanation does not seem satisfactory. Perhaps however, verbs of saying do present some peculiarities of use. One is reminded of the English colloquial use of "he was saying" for "he said."



In the "Captives" Wheeler recognizes but one aoristic imperfect "aibatis" 576. This I have classed as repeated. In his statistical table given at the close of his article (Classical Philology I) he has only accounted for 12 imperfects and the play contains 24. He states that his citations are complete "excluding all passages of dubious authorship, corrupt text, or insufficient text." For these reasons I was ~~only~~<sup>only</sup> able to account for three of the twelve omissions. However no forms of "aibam" were thus excluded but five of "eram" were.

Bennett recognizes a much larger number of aoristic imperfects and does not confine the usage to the two verbs but in his examples from the "Captives" only those two verbs are included. They are "aibat" 561, "aibatis" 676 and "erat" 273. The first two I have classed as repeated and the last as descriptive. It is not difficult to understand why Bennett's number of aorists is greatly increased, especially by his count of "eram" and its compounds. He is not able to distinguish between a descriptive use and an aoristic. In "The Syntax of Early Latin--The Verb" page 34, he says: "It is so difficult for me to see any notion of continued action in the imperfect of "sum" that I have classed unhesitatingly as aoristic nearly all the instances of "eram" and its compounds." He then proceeds to give this example: Amph. 429.

"cadus erat vini, inde implevi hirneam" and states that "erat" seems to be of the same nature as "implevi". He could not have found an example that would have served much better to indicate the distinction between the descriptive use of the imperfect and the aoristic use of the perfect.

The following table gives my count of all imperfects examined and the figures bear out the statements that I have made.

	Progressive			Repeat ed	Per- sistent	Shif- ted	App- ar- aoris- tic	Tot- al
	Descriptive	Simple	Repeated					
Capt.	15	3	1	3	2	0	0	24
Man Law	29	0	0	0	0	2	0	31
Gallic War BkI	102	15	4	4	6	0	0	131
Aeneid I-VI	229	10	18	3	1	0	6	267
								453

#### Perfects and Historical Presents

As I have stated I examined all of the perfects and historical presents of the works studied for I believe that one cannot draw true conclusions especially concerning the possibility of an aoristic use of the imperfect without watching these aoristic tenses and noticing how they act under simil-

ar circumstances. My count of these tenses is as follows:

Captives 283 Perfects

Man. Law 208 Perfects

Gallic War Book I 199 Perfects 98 Historical Presents

Aeneid I-VI 944 Perfects 1387 Historical Presents.

I shall not attempt to classify or explain all of the uses that these tenses presented. For present purposes I consider it sufficient to call attention to those aorists that are apparently used as imperfects and to make a few general distinctions concerning the uses of the tenses.

I found but three perfects that seemed to be used as imperfects.

Capt.

430 volui

This perfect seems to present much the same difficulty and to require a similar explanation as "*noluit*"  
*below*

Gallic War

28 noluit

This form of "nolo" appears to be used as "nolebat" 18 and to give the situation for "fecit" 28 It is possible however, that Caesar wanted to express the idea of "noluit" as quite independent of the time of "fecit."

Aeneid I

I 121 vectus

As the form of "sum" is omitted this is not a clear case. In what seems to be a similar usage "vehebat" is used in 113. It would seem that a pluperfect might be used here but perhaps it would be claiming too much to say that where Vergil omitted the form of "sum" he did so without consciously having in mind the form that would be used if one were to be expressed. If such were the case we might explain this difficulty.

I now call attention to the following general distinctions and to idiomatic uses.

(1) Perfects and historical presents of verbs of "thinking" are used to express the idea of past decision while the imperfects are used to describe some mental state that existed at a certain past time.

(2) Often the perfect of "sum" was used where the imperfect might have been expected but in every case the perfect seemed to express an independent fact or to be the first point in an account and therefore its use justified that the mind of the reader might be taken back to this past time.

Caesar 2 (1)

Apud Helvetios longe nobillissimus fuit et ditissimus Orgitorix.

(3) Repeated or persistent action has been given as a meaning of the imperfect tense. The perfect tense is frequently used to express these ideas but in every case

noted some word as "saepe", "semper", "cotidie" etc was used . The imperfect tense on the other hand conveys the idea of repetition or persistency without the aid of any such words. In other words it is really a tense forced in the imperfect.

Aeneid I 669

et nostro doluisti saepe dolore.

(4) Perfects and historical presents of verbs of saying were freely employed with the aoristic use. No perfect of such a verb was found that could be confused with the progressive ~~as~~ imperfect use.

(5) "Dum" meaning "as long as" and expressing coincidence in time is by a fixed idiom regularly used with the perfect, <sup>if the verb of the main clause is a perfect.</sup> Otherwise the imperfect would often be expressed if it <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ used of past time. However in the Aeneid the imperfect was often used with "dum". "Ut" introducing a clause coincident in time was also found with the perfect rather than the imperfect. (Clauses coincident in time by fixed usage regularly employed the same tense)

(6) "Dum" meaning "while" was found used with the present rather than the imperfect. This, too, is a fixed idiom, however.

(7) In clauses of equivalent action (Male--Buck 551) with "quom" (Plautus) and with "ubi" the perfect was used where

(8) In the "cum inversum" clause the aoristic perfect or present is used and not the imperfect for logically the "cum" clause is the principal clause and expresses the event rather than describes the situation under which the event took place. It is the independent clause that uses the imperfect because it is the descriptive clause.

an imperfect would have been expected. This again was accounted for by the fact that by idiomatic use clauses of equivalent action employ the same tenses.

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### Conclusion

My search for an aoristic imperfect that led me into an investigation of all the imperfects, the perfects, and historical presents of the works included in this discussion has convinced me that there is practically no confusion of tense usage to be found here and: (1) That the imperfect tense is essentially progressive and is chiefly used to describe some state or situation that the writer has in mind. Out of the 453 imperfects I have only recognized 2 shifted imperfects, 6 apparent aoristic uses, and 19 progressives where the descriptive use is not evident and which I have classed as repeated or persistent. (2) That the perfect tense is used to express "a past act or state as seen in summary from the present" and is mainly employed to advance a narrative or to record past events of independent importance.